



Extraordinary Council

Tue 13 Jan
2026

7.00 pm (or, if later, as soon as the meeting of the Executive Committee immediately prior to this Council meeting has finished.)

This agenda has been dispatched less than five clear days prior to the meeting due to exceptional circumstances. These exceptional circumstances are that the inclement weather arising from Storm Goretti resulted in the need to postpone the Extraordinary Council meeting from the original date of 8th January 2026 and the Council needs to provide a response to the Government in respect of the main substantive item of business by 15th January 2026.

Oakenshaw Community Centre,
Castleditch Lane, B98 7YB

**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jess Bayley-Hill**

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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting and will be live streamed for general access via the Council's YouTube channel.

You are able to see and hear the livestream of the meeting from the Committee Pages of the website, alongside the agenda for the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

This meeting will be open to the public to attend to observe. The meeting will also be available to view on the live stream that will be available via the Council's YouTube channel.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:

Joanna Kane (Mayor)	Sid Khan
David Munro (Deputy Mayor)	Wanda King
Joe Baker	Alan Mason
Juliet Barker Smith	Sachin Mathur
Juma Begum	Gemma Monaco
William Boyd	Rita Rogers
Brandon Clayton	Gary Slim
Claire Davies	Jen Snape
Matthew Dormer	Jane Spilsbury
James Fardoe	Monica Stringfellow
Andrew Fry	Craig Warhurst
Bill Hartnett	Ian Woodall
Sharon Harvey	Paul Wren
Chris Holz	

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

- 4. Minutes** (Pages 5 - 18)
- 5. Local Government Reorganisation: Postponement of May 2026 Borough Elections** (Pages 19 - 28)
- 6. Urgent Business - general** (if any)

To consider any additional items exceptionally agreed by the Mayor as Urgent Business in accordance with the powers vested in him by virtue of Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

(This power should be exercised only in cases where there are genuinely special circumstances which require consideration of an item which has not previously been published on the Order of Business for the meeting.)

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MINUTES**Present:**

Councillor Joanna Kane (Mayor), Councillor David Munro (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, William Boyd, Brandon Clayton, Claire Davies, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Chris Holz, Wanda King, Gary Slim, Monica Stringfellow, Craig Warhurst, Ian Woodall and Paul Wren

Officers:

Claire Felton, Debra Goodall, John Leach and Guy Revans

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill

44. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Joe Baker, Juma Begum, Sid Khan, Alan Mason, Sachin Mathur, Gemma Monaco, Rita Rogers, Jen Snape and Jane Spilsbury.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

47. MINUTES**RESOLVED that**

the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 4th September and 15th September 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

48. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made at the meeting.

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a) The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that she had circulated a list of civic engagements that she had attended between September and November 2025 (Appendix 1).

Council was advised that Remembrance Sunday commemorations had recently taken place in Redditch town centre and Astwood Bank. The Royal British Legion was thanked for organising the commemorations and the local community and elected Members were thanked for attending these events. The Mayor also thanked the Deputy Mayor for attending three engagements on her behalf during this period.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader thanked all those Members who had supported the letter she had sent to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) regarding a police desk for Redditch. A response had been received from the PCC which indicated that the force did not have the resources to address this request. However, the Leader advised that she would continue to highlight the need for a police desk in Redditch moving forward.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had no announcements to make on this occasion.

49. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION: TRANSFORMING WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE, POWERED BY PLACE AND BUILT FOR THE FUTURE - THE NORTH AND SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION PROPOSAL FOR WORCESTERSHIRE

The Leader presented the Local Government Re-organisation: Transforming Worcestershire - Local Government that works for people, powered by place and built for the future - The North and South Local Government Re-Organisation Proposal for Worcestershire report for Members' consideration.

In presenting the report, she thanked the Chief Executives of Redditch Borough, Bromsgrove District, Malvern Hills District, Worcester City District and Wychavon District Councils for their hard work on the report. The Leader also thanked the other Leaders of these authorities for working with her and Redditch Borough Council on the report and proposals.

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Members were informed that the purpose of the report was to provide to Council a proposal to be submitted to Government by 28th November 2025 for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Worcestershire. This followed the extraordinary meeting of Council on 4th September 2025 where Members had supported the development of a North and South Unitary Council model based at the time on what was termed Option B – which comprised of either entirely separate Councils or a shared service model.

Working with KPMG, which had subsequently been commissioned, and Mutual Ventures, which developed proposals beyond the options appraisal, Redditch Borough, Bromsgrove District, Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District Councils had been working together to produce a proposal that best met the Government's six criteria for LGR based on a North and South Worcestershire footprint as directed by Members. The North would consist of Redditch Borough, Bromsgrove District and Wyre Forest District and the South would consist of Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District.

The North and South LGR proposal for Worcestershire had been included at Appendix 1 of the LGR report to Council and was entitled "Transforming Worcestershire: Local government that works for people, powered by place and built for the future." This was the only Worcestershire LGR proposal that had been informed by the views of local people from across the whole of Worcestershire following the "Shape Worcestershire" survey that was supported by all six District Councils in the County. The Leader reminded Members that Criteria 4 of the Government's specific requirements for LGR stated:

"Proposals should show how Councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views."

Not only had local people's views been taken into account in this proposal, all Members across the five commissioning Councils had been given opportunity to further shape the two unitary Councils proposal for Worcestershire. This approach recognised the democratic mandate of Councillors as representatives of their communities and the very people who received Council services. Further to this, key stakeholders, such as partners in the health sector, police, fire and rescue authority, business and voluntary and community sectors, including Town and Parish Councils, had also been asked for their views. The output of all this work was a proposal for Worcestershire that was a product of true collaboration.

The proposal included a pledge that should this proposal be accepted by Government and delivered then: -

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- a) Public services would shift from crisis to prevention
- b) Communities would feel more connected and empowered
- c) Local services would respond faster to everyday issues
- d) Vulnerable adults would live healthier, happier, and safer lives
- e) Children and families would be supported to stay together
- f) Young people would have better access to skills and jobs
- g) Better housing would support healthier lives
- h) People and businesses would benefit from stronger local economies

The Leader commented that the case for two Councils in Worcestershire was clear. The North and South model:

- Supported long-term financial sustainability through prevention-led reform and neighbourhood-based services. Members were asked to note that for every £1 spent on prevention £3.17 was saved on adult social care. The North and South unitary model would save approximately £9 million a year whilst delivering services people wanted, as opposed to perhaps saving more money but delivering services people did not want through a remote, large, digital-by-default, one-size-fits-all Council.
- Reflected the strong and consistent preference of residents, staff, and partners across the county. This corresponded with the views of the 62.5 per cent of people who took part in the Shape Worcestershire survey who stated a preference for a North and South model. That survey showed more residents believed two Unitary Councils would better improve services, support local identity and strengthen community engagement. In contrast, the one-unitary model was seen as remote, less representative and more likely to dilute local priorities.
- Delivered stronger local accountability and decision-making, with Councillors closer to the communities they served. This proposal for Worcestershire would better help keep democracy alive in the County.
- Enabled tailored service delivery and planning that responded to the distinct needs of North and South Worcestershire.
- Embraced the opportunity for genuine transformation. Members were informed that this was the only option shaped by genuine engagement, backed by evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, and designed to deliver better outcomes for Worcestershire.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Sharon Harvey and seconded by Councillor Bill Hartnett.

In seconding the resolutions, Councillor Hartnett commented that Members had been fully engaged throughout the process of

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developing proposals for LGR in Worcestershire. This had included a number of Member Briefings and he thanked Members for attending these sessions.

It was noted that the report, although detailed, had been drafted in plain English, clearly setting out the reasons why the North and South Unitary Councils option would be best for the Borough. The final decision in respect of LGR in Worcestershire would be taken by the Government, rather than by local Councils. However the content of the report would help to inform that decision-making.

In considering the content of the report, Members were asked to note that the two unitary Councils proposed reflected recognition of the differences between the rural South of the county and the more urban North. Furthermore, Members were asked to note that if the Government's Fair Funding Review resulted in changes to funding for local government, focusing on deprivation, then Redditch would be in a better financial position in a North and South model of Unitary Councils.

Concerns were raised that in a single Unitary Councils for Worcestershire, Redditch's assets could be placed at risk. In particular, concerns were raised about the potential for the Council housing stock, valued at approximately £330 million, to be sold in order to address budget gaps in local government in Worcestershire. The suggestion was made that this would disproportionately impact on vulnerable residents living in the Borough, given that Redditch Borough Council was the only authority in Worcestershire that still retained a housing stock.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The need for a range of factors, not just financial savings, to be taken into account when considering the most appropriate model of LGR for Worcestershire.
- The inclusion of prudent and realistic cost saving assumptions in the report relating to the two Unitary Authorities model.
- The fact that the report provided one model of LGR for Members to consider, rather than separate B1 and B2 models, as referenced in the report that was considered at the extraordinary Council meeting held on 4th September 2025.
- The considerable concerns that Members had about the potential for Redditch Borough Council's housing stock to be sold should the Government approve the One Worcestershire model and the impact that this would have on the people of Redditch.

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- The potential value arising from supporting a North and South model of Unitary Councils, in terms of protecting the Borough's assets.
- The conversations that Members had held with residents regarding LGR and the overwhelming support expressed by local residents in favour of the North and South Unitary Authorities model as opposed to a single Unitary Authority for Worcestershire.
- The extent to which people wanted LGR. Some Members expressed their disappointment that Redditch Borough Council would cease to exist after 2028.
- The risk that local identity would be lost as a result of unitarisation, regardless of the final model of LGR that was adopted.
- The locations in which Council and Committee meetings would be held for either a single or two Unitary Councils in Worcestershire and the extent to which it was likely that any meetings would be held in Redditch. Members were informed that no decisions had been made on this subject to date, although it was noted that the Town Hall was in the process of being refurbished and there was the possibility that meetings could be held in the upgraded civic suite.
- The potential for services to be shared between the North and South Unitary Councils, under the proposals, and how this would work for statutory services such as Adult Social Care and education.
- The benefits arising from LGR and the introduction of Unitary Authorities in terms of preventative action that could enhance health outcomes and community safety.
- The financial savings that had been reported in papers relating to the alternative One Worcestershire model of LGR and the extent to which these figures were accurate.
- The fact that data underpinning the financial estimates for One Worcestershire had not been shared by Worcestershire County Council with the District Councils in Worcestershire. Members expressed their disappointment that this data had not been shared with the District Councils.
- The savings in respect of middle management costs reported in the report relating to the One Worcestershire model. Members commented that it was unclear whether this had taken into account the significant number of shared service arrangements in place between District Councils in the county.
- The wages that would be paid to staff employed by the future Unitary Authority(ies) in Worcestershire and whether the One Worcestershire model had been based on assumptions that some staff would be paid less than the minimum wage.
- The extent to which pension costs for staff under the One Worcestershire model might have been over inflated.

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- The financial costs associated with frontline service delivery and whether this had been taken into account in the papers underpinning the One Worcestershire model.
- The assumptions made in the One Worcestershire model in respect of the reduction in frontline staff numbers and whether this was over optimistic.
- The overall redundancy costs that might need to be paid to staff as a result of LGR and whether these were accurate in the One Worcestershire report.

In concluding their discussions, Members highlighted that it was important to note that there was unanimity in the chamber regarding the proposals and the most appropriate model of LGR for Redditch.

RESOLVED

- 1) **that the matters set out in the Local Government Reorganisation Transforming Worcestershire proposal; Local Government that works for people, powered by place and built for the future - The north and south Local Government Re-Organisation Proposal be noted;**
- 2) **to adopt the Local Government Reorganisation Transforming Worcestershire proposal; Local government that works for people, powered by place and built for the future - the north and south Local Government Re-Organisation Proposal for Worcestershire, as the Council's final submission to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government ("MHCLG") on the issue of Local Government Re-organisation; and**
- 3) **that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and the Assistant Director of Legal Democratic and Procurement Services to make any final amendments to the report following consultation with the Leader and thereafter to submit the document to the MHCLG by the deadline of Friday 28th November 2025.**

50. WAIVER OF THE SIX MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE

The Leader presented a report requesting a waiver on the six-month Councillor attendance rule, whereby each Councillor was required to attend at least one meeting every six months, for Councillor Alan Mason.

Members were informed that unfortunately, Councillor Mason had experienced poor health in recent months which had prevented him from attending Council and Committee meetings. It was hoped that

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his health would improve to enable him to attend meetings prior to the end of his current term of office in May 2026. However, the waiver would extend the period of time in which he would not be required to attend meetings.

The request was discussed and during the debate, some Members raised concerns about Councillors continuing in roles where they were unable to attend meetings. However, it was noted that there were a number of ways in which Councillors could support their communities, with attendance at Council and Committee meetings forming only part of the role. Indeed, Members were advised that Councillor Mason had been working on casework. The suggestion was made that it would be helpful if Councils could enable Members to attend meetings in a variety of accessible ways, rather than requiring attendance in person only, as this would assist Councillors with different health conditions and personal commitments and support greater diversity in democratic representation within local government. However, such flexibility would require primary legislation.

RESOLVED that

in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Council approve Councillor Alan Mason's non-attendance at meetings until 7th May 2026 on the grounds of continued ill health and that the Council's best wishes be conveyed to him.

51. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

There were no Questions on Notice for consideration on this occasion.

52. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

There were no Motions on Notice on this occasion.

53. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Medium-Term Financial Plan Budget Update and Consultation Report 2026-27 to 2028-29 - Business Rates Pool

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the Medium-Term Financial Plan Budget Update and Consultation Report 2026-27 to 2028-29 - Business Rates Pool report for Members' consideration.

Council was informed that, under the Local Government and Finance Act 2012, Councils could enter into business rates pools. The Government's deadline for Councils to submit proposals to

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enter a business rates pool for 2026/27 was 24th November 2025. Councils could only enter a business rates pool if the authority would be no worse off financially as a consequence of joining a pool. The Council had previously taken part in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Business Rates Pool so a decision to join on this occasion would ensure continuity.

In discussing this matter, Members noted that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group held earlier in the month when Members had supported the proposal to join the pool.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 6th November 2025 be approved and all recommendations adopted.

54. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

Members were informed that there had been one urgent decision taken since the previous meeting of Council in respect of the appointment of the Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services as the acting Section 151 Officer for the Council.

55. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no urgent business for discussion on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.00 pm

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Minutes – Appendix 1 - Mayoral Engagements during September 2025

Date	Event	Venue
Saturday 6 th	Breakfast organised by Redditch Round Table and its affiliated clubs in aid of the Primrose Hospice	Webheath Village Hall
Saturday 6 th	Opened Mother Hubbard's Famous Fish and Chips	Market Place
Friday 12 th	Held 'A Late Summer Evening by the Lake' in aid of the Primrose Hospice	The Boathouse, Arrow Valley Country Park
Saturday 13 th	Attended Onam, organised by Kerala Cultural Association Redditch	Trinity High School
Saturday 13 th	Presented the Community Hero winner and Highly Commended awards at the Redditch Business Awards 2025	Palace Theatre
Wednesday 17 th	Attended preview of Arts in Redditch's pop-up gallery	Kingfisher Centre
Friday 19 th	Heart of Worcestershire College's Graduation 2025	Worcester Cathedral
Friday 19 th	Mayor of Bromsgrove's charity quiz in aid of The Basement Project	Bromsgrove Golf Club
Friday 26 th	Inaugural banquet of the Mayor of Worcester in aid of Acorns Children's Hospice	Guildhall, Worcester
Saturday 27 th	Presented medals to children who completed the Summer Reading Challenge 2025	Redditch Library
Sunday 28 th	Attended the opening of the new Redditch Police and Fire Hub	Middlehouse Lane

Mayoral Engagements during October 2025

Date	Event	Venue
Tuesday 7 th	Grand opening of new extension (attended by the Deputy Mayor)	Birchensale Middle School
Friday 10 th	A Musical Evening in aid of the Wyre Forest Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Chairman of Wyre Forest District Council's charity (attended by the Deputy Mayor)	St George's Social Club, Kidderminster
Sunday 12 th	Attended the launch of a new garden space at the Primrose Hospice	Primrose Hospice, Bromsgrove
Sunday 12 th	Attended the High Sheriff's Shrieval Service (Judicial Evensong)	Worcester Cathedral
Wednesday 15 th	Visit to the Houses of Parliament hosted by Chris Bloore MP	Houses of Parliament, London
Friday 17 th	Primrose Hospice Choir 25 Years Anniversary Concert	Rocklands Club
Saturday 18 th	Opened Apple Day	Headless Cross Green
Thursday 23 rd	Visit for the 100 th birthday of Lorna White MBE	Brambles Residential Care Home
Thursday 23 rd	Opened soft play adventure area Monster Mayhem	Lakeside Industrial Estate
Thursday 23 rd	Launch of 'Chasing Hope' mural inspired by the starling murmurations in Redditch	Heart of Worcestershire College
Saturday 25 th	Poppy Appeal launch (attended by the Deputy Mayor)	Kingfisher Centre
Friday 31 st	Attended meeting of Ribbons Cancer Group for All	Willow Trees Community Centre

Mayoral Engagements during November 2025

Date	Event	Venue
Tuesday 4 th	Visited the following charities with the High Sheriff: AHead of Wellbeing, Bound Together CIC, Inspire Support Services, Primrose Hospice, Batchley Support Group Redditch Communities, Where Next Day Service and the Redi Centre	Adelaide Street Winyates Craft Centre Kingfisher Centre Prospect Hill Wellesbourne Close South Street
Wednesday 5 th	Presentation of badge to Mayoral Cadet at 1 st Redditch Scout Group's bonfire night	Hadlow Close, Greenlands
Friday 7 th	Attended the reopening of Kidderminster Town Hall following major refurbishment	Kidderminster Town Hall
Sunday 9 th	Remembrance Sunday	Redditch Town Centre
Sunday 9 th	Veterans' breakfast organised by Redditch Round Table	South Redditch Sports and Social Club
Sunday 9 th	Opened VIP fashion show	Riley Boutique, Kingfisher Centre
Tuesday 11 th	Armistice Day	The Cenotaph, Plymouth Road
Tuesday 11 th	Visited artwork remembering the soldiers who were shot at dawn during the First World War	Redditch Library
Friday 14 th	Attended RoadPeace West Midlands and West Mercia's Act of Remembrance	The Boathouse, Arrow Valley Country Park
Saturday 15 th	Joined Redditch One World Link's fundraising lunch in aid of Friends of Mtwara	Cookhill Baptist Church
Sunday 16 th	Helped Worcestershire Interfaith Forum serve coffee, tea and cakes to hospital staff, patients and visitors to mark Mitzvah Day	Alexandra Hospital

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Local Government Reorganisation: Postponement of May 2026 Borough Elections

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sharon Harvey, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Claire Felton Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
Report Author	Job Title: Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to RESOLVE:

1) To NOTE the letter received by the Leader from the Government in respect of the potential postponement of local elections in May 2026;

2) To approve one of the following options:

Option A: to proceed with the scheduled local elections in May 2026; OR

Option B: to submit a request to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that the Borough elections due to take place in May 2026 be postponed; and

3) That were members minded to approve resolution 2 Option B above, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to submit the Council's views in relation to postponing the local elections in May 2026 in writing to the Government before the deadline of 15th January 2026.

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2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report asks Members to consider whether to make a request to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (“MHCLG”) for the Borough elections due to take Council in May 2026 to be postponed. This is in the context of the ongoing work towards implementing Local Government Reorganisation (“LGR”) in Worcestershire.
- 2.2 Members will be aware that the Council’s proposals for LGR were submitted to MHCLG on 27th November. The Council has chosen to support the north and south Local Government Reorganisation Proposal for Worcestershire which would see the establishment of two unitary authorities, one in the North covering Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest, and one in the South covering Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon. The alternative proposal that has been put forward by Worcestershire County Council and Wyre Forrest District Council is that there should be one County wide unitary authority for the whole of Worcestershire.
- 2.3 Although a decision from the MHCLG on which option will be adopted is not due to be announced until the summer of 2026, there remains much work to be done in terms of preparing for the re-organisation.
- 2.4 Based on the current timetable issued by the government, there will be all out elections to the new shadow authorities (or authority) in May 2027, with the transition to new Councils coming into effect on Vesting Day in April 2028.
- 2.5 It should be noted that no other Council in Worcestershire is due to hold local elections in May 2026 and were Redditch to hold its election it would be in respect of 9 seats. To avoid the potentially de-stabilising effect of this on the LGR process, and to maximise staff capacity and reduce expenditure, the Council could ask the Government to postpone the 2026 elections and agree to extend the term of office of the councillors who would otherwise have been subject to re-election.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The current round of local government re-organisation is the most far reaching that has taken place since the early 1970s. According to statistics from MHCLG, the reorganisation will affect 204 councils across 21 areas. The MHCLG recently confirmed that a number of councils affected by LGR (which did not include Redditch Borough Council) had requested that the elections due to be held in their areas in 2026 be postponed.

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- 3.2 On 18th December, Alison McGovern, the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness, wrote to the Leaders of all 63 Councils affected by elections in May 2026 to invite them to submit their views on the potential postponement of local elections in their areas and their local capacity to deliver LGR alongside elections. The deadline for responses to be sent to the MHCLG is midnight on 15th January 2026. The following extract from the letter of 18th December summarises the concerns held by some councils of the impacts of having to hold elections in May 2026.

“We have listened to councils telling us about the constraints they are operating within, and the work that reorganisation introduces on top of existing challenges. Now that we have received all proposals, it is only right that we listen to councils who are expressing concerns about their capacity to deliver a smooth and safe transition to new councils, alongside running resource-intensive elections to councils who may be shortly abolished. We have also received representations from councils concerned about the cost to taxpayers of holding elections to councils that are proposed to shortly be abolished.”

- 3.3 The situation in Redditch is that a third of Council seats at the authority are due to be the subject of local elections in May 2026. However, this will be following on only a year after the all-out elections which took place in 2024 as a result of ward boundary changes. This means that the 9 councillors in seats due for election will only have actually served two years in office when the next elections take place. If elections were to go ahead, the councillors elected may only serve one year, before elections to the shadow authority take place, although they would remain Borough Councillors until the authority ceases to exist in April 2028.
- 3.4 It is recognised that postponing a local election is a significant decision which should not be undertaken lightly. One of the criticisms that is often made is that councillors get an extended term in office as a result. However, in Redditch given the very recent timing of the previous elections in May 2024, it is not the case that any members would be outlasting the usual 4 year term in office.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that when multiple elections are delivered in any given year it has been possible for the cost burden associated with the administration of these elections to be shared and/or the cost burden to Redditch Borough Council in respect of the local election to be reduced as a consequence. In May 2026 this is not however the case and therefore the whole administrative costs fall to the Council. The cost to Redditch Borough Council of delivering local elections in May 2026 would be circa £192,000.

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- 3.6 Members may also want to consider the potential loss of Councillors who have been following the LGR process closely and have built up a good understanding of what is involved, and whether this could have a de-stabilising effect.
- 3.7 As the Returning Officer for Redditch Borough Council, the Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the local elections are administered effectively. To enable this to occur, there needs to be sufficient staff resources available to facilitate all aspects of the local elections. Initial planning for the local elections in the Borough has already started. It should be noted that both the Polling Day and the election Count require resourcing which has significant associated staffing costs.
- 3.8 Elections staff who would be running the 2026 local elections are likely at the same time to also be involved in detailed work around planning for the governance arrangements of the new authority, and the setting up of elections for the shadow authority.
- 3.9 It should be noted, as Members may be aware, that at meetings of the Electoral Matters Committee held in October and December 2025, Members discussed proposals for Redditch Borough to participate in a flexible voting pilot scheme for the local elections due to take place in May 2026. Based on the decision taken by the Committee in October, a proposal was submitted to the MHCLG in autumn 2025 for Redditch Borough Council to take part in the flexible voting pilot scheme and at the time of writing the Council is awaiting a response from the Government. It should be noted that any costs associated with the pilot would be covered by the Government.
- 3.10 There are also time and resource implications arising from the election of any new Councillor. Whilst work has already started on the Members' induction and training programme for 2026/27 the requirement to induct new Councillors elected in May 2026 would coincide with a time when senior managers and staff involved in governance arrangements would be committed to work around preparations for LGR.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As detailed at paragraph 3.5, it is projected that the cost of holding the 2026 local elections in Redditch would be at least £192,000 possibly rising to £200,000. Members are asked to note that even should the local elections be postponed in May 2026 there could still be some residual costs arising from administrative tasks already undertaken and contractual costs.

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5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The legal power to postpone a scheduled election sits with the government. If a recommendation to delay local elections in 2026 is approved, then the Secretary of State will make an order under the powers set out in Section 87(1) and (3) and Section 105(2) and (3) of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 5.2 Members are asked to note that even if the local elections in May 2026 are postponed there may still be a need to hold by-elections where the rules require.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The subject matter of this report links directly to LGR. The Council can make a recommendation to the MHCLG to postpone the 2026 local elections if the view is taken that the advantages of this step outweigh the disadvantages. The final decision sits with the Minister.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 Any change to either a two unitary model or a single countywide model will have a potential impact on the future of the current Redditch Borough Council priorities.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no specific climate change implications.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 There are no specific Equalities and Diversity implications.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is a risk that the Council could suffer reputational damage as a result of requesting a postponement to the elections.
- 7.2 There is also a risk that the public may feel that postponing the elections would undermine local democracy.

Council
2026

13th January

- 7.3 However, conversely there is a risk that if the local elections were to go ahead as scheduled, this could be regarded as a profligate use of public funding at a time when the Council is shortly no longer due to exist.
- 7.4 Members may also want to consider the allocation of staff resources and the impact that this may have were the elections to proceed.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter sent to Council Leaders by Alison McGovern,
Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness dated 18th
December 2025



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Alison McGovern MP

*Minister of State for Local Government
and Homelessness*

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

To: Leaders of councils with elections
in May 2026 where proposals for
reorganisation have been submitted
and decisions not yet taken

18 December 2025

Dear Leader,

I am writing to you regarding the elections your council is scheduled to hold on 7 May 2026.

This Government is determined to streamline local government by replacing the current two-tier system with new single-tier unitary councils, ending the wasteful two-tier premium. We are progressing this landmark reform quickly, which will be vital in delivering our vision: stronger local councils equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and empower their communities. I am fully committed to ensuring councils can deliver new, sustainable structures within this Parliament.

We have now received proposals from all 20 remaining invitation areas, demonstrating strong collaboration between local partners. A consultation is open on 17 of those proposals from six invitation areas. I expect to launch a consultation in early February on proposals from the remaining 14 areas that seek to meet the terms of the 5 February statutory invitation. That consultation would be for seven weeks.

I remain committed to the indicative timetable that was published in July, that sees elections to new councils in May 2027 and those councils going live in April 2028. This is a complex process, and we will take decisions based on the evidence provided.

We have listened to councils telling us about the constraints they are operating within, and the work that reorganisation introduces on top of existing challenges. Now that we have received all proposals, it is only right that we listen to councils who are expressing concerns about their capacity to deliver a smooth and safe transition to new councils, alongside running resource-intensive elections to councils who may be shortly abolished. We have also received representations from councils concerned about the cost to taxpayers of holding elections to councils that are proposed to shortly be abolished.

Previous governments have postponed local elections in areas contemplating and undergoing local government reorganisation to allow councils to focus their time and energy on the process. We have now received requests from multiple councils to postpone their local elections in May 2026.

The Secretary of State recognises that capacity will vary between councils and that is why he has reached the position that, in his view, councils are in the best position to

judge the impact of potential postponements on your area and in the spirit of devolution and trusting local leaders, this Government will listen to you.

I am therefore inviting you, by midnight on Thursday 15 January, to set out your views on the postponement of your local election and if you consider this could release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation in your area and so allow reorganisation to progress effectively. For those who have already made their views known, we will be taking these into account. Views should be sent by email to LGRElections@communities.gov.uk.

The Secretary of State has adopted a locally-led approach. He is clear that should a council say they have no reason for postponement, then we will listen. But if you voice genuine concerns about your capacity, then we will take these concerns seriously. To that end, the Secretary of State is only minded to make an Order to postpone elections for one year for those councils who raise capacity concerns. A list of the relevant elections is annexed.

For areas where there are also scheduled town or parish council elections, the Secretary of State is minded to make no provision in the Order so these elections continue as scheduled, given town and parish councils are outside of local government reorganisation.

I appreciate that preparations for elections may have started, and you will be keen to have certainty, which we will deliver as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter to your Chief Executives, the other Leaders and Chief Executives of councils in the local government reorganisation programme, and to local MPs, Combined/Combined County Authority Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners and Best Value Commissioners in local government reorganisation areas.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alison', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ALISON MCGOVERN MP

Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness

**Annex – 63 councils with elections under consideration for postponement
(there are 64 elections including that for the Mayor of Watford)**

1. Adur District Council
2. Basildon Borough Council
3. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
4. Blackburn with Darwen Council
5. Brentwood Borough Council
6. Broxbourne Borough Council
7. Burnley Borough Council
8. Cambridge City Council
9. Cannock Chase District Council
10. Cheltenham Borough Council
11. Cherwell District Council
12. Chorley Borough Council
13. City of Lincoln Council
14. Colchester City Council
15. Crawley Borough Council
16. East Sussex County Council
17. Eastleigh Borough Council
18. Epping Forest District Council
19. Essex County Council
20. Exeter City Council
21. Fareham Borough Council
22. Gosport Borough Council
23. Hampshire County Council
24. Harlow District Council
25. Hart District Council
26. Hastings Borough Council
27. Havant Borough Council
28. Huntingdonshire District Council
29. Hyndburn Borough Council
30. Ipswich Borough Council
31. Isle of Wight Council
32. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
33. Norfolk County Council
34. North East Lincolnshire Council
35. Norwich City Council
36. Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
37. Oxford City Council
38. Pendle Borough Council
39. Peterborough City Council
40. Plymouth City Council
41. Portsmouth City Council
42. Preston City Council
43. Redditch Borough Council
44. Rochford District Council

45. Rugby Borough Council
46. Rushmoor Borough Council
47. South Cambridgeshire District Council
48. Southampton City Council
49. Southend-on-Sea City Council
50. St Albans City and District Council
51. Stevenage Borough Council
52. Suffolk County Council
53. Tamworth Borough Council
54. Three Rivers District Council
55. Thurrock Council
56. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
57. Watford Borough Council
58. Watford Borough Council Mayor
59. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
60. West Lancashire Borough Council
61. West Oxfordshire District Council
62. West Sussex County Council
63. Winchester City Council
64. Worthing Borough Council